



24 January 2005



## **SAFETY ALERT**

### **Soldier Killed in Winter Car Crash**

1. Last Tuesday was ugly in Germany. Snow, freezing rain, slush, and ice created some of the worst driving conditions we have seen so far this winter. These conditions contributed to many vehicle crashes that day, one of which claimed the life of a USAREUR Soldier. He was killed when he lost control of his vehicle and crossed the center line into the path of an oncoming 40-ton truck. At the time, road conditions were Amber.
2. "Black ice" may have been a factor in this crash. Black ice is a thin, extremely slick layer of ice on the road. Because it is so thin, it is essentially invisible and looks as black as the road. It also tends to make the road look wet instead of icy. Drivers who hit a patch of black ice may unexpectedly be unable to brake or steer their vehicle and suddenly find themselves in danger of skidding out of control.
3. Over the last several years, many USAREUR personnel have been injured or killed in car crashes during winter. Many of these crashes could have been prevented if the drivers had assessed the risks involved with their travel and modified their plans and behavior accordingly. We must take steps to prevent these tragedies.
  - I ask all of you to reaffirm your commitment to safety by reviewing and ensuring you understand the hazards associated with winter driving. These hazards are explained in our Winter Safety Campaign (encl 4, tab C), which is available on the USAREUR homepage. Following the guidance in the Winter Safety Campaign will help us avoid injuries and loss of life this winter.
  - BSB commanders are responsible for determining and announcing road conditions for their geographic areas of responsibility. Unit commanders are responsible for assessing the risks associated with those road conditions and assigning missions accordingly by using sound risk-management techniques. Commanders must ensure that their personnel do not take unnecessary risks, whether they are driving an Army motor vehicle or a privately owned vehicle, especially during bad weather. USAREUR Regulation 385-55, appendix I, defines road conditions for the Army in Europe. Commanders who are not familiar with these conditions and the procedures for responding to them need to review the regulation.

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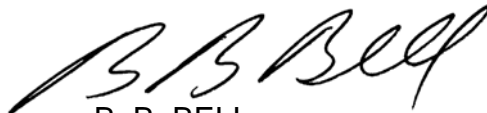
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- Leaders and supervisors must identify personnel in their unit who lack winter-driving experience and do whatever it takes to prepare them for the risks of the road. Sponsors must do the same thing with their family members. Leaders, supervisors, and sponsors who do not have experience in winter driving must ask for guidance.

- Leaders and supervisors must also talk with subordinates about their personal appointments or plans, and help them change their appointments or modify their plans if the risks involved are too great. These discussions are not an invasion of privacy, they are a show of respect and commitment to the well-being of the individual and to mission readiness.

- Commanders who decide to release their personnel early based on worsening weather conditions must take time to remind them of the dangers they will face on their way home. These individuals need to understand the dangers of winter driving when the weather is bad. Hearing about it in a routine safety briefing is not good enough.

4. Ensure that this safety alert is given the widest possible distribution by forwarding it electronically and posting it on unit bulletin boards. Commitment to safety and knowledge of winter-driving techniques will get us safely through the winter, fully mission capable, and ready to execute with excellence Any Mission, Anywhere.



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General, USA  
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